

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 432

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GR
SUBJECT: ANDREAS PAPANDREOU-THE NOISY OPPOSITION

1. SUMMARY. ANDREAS PAPANDREOU CONTINUES TO HOLD CENTER STAGE AMONG OPPOSITION POLITICIANS WITH A RARE ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE PUBLIC ATTENTION UPON HIMSELF AND HIS ACTIVITIES. BUT HE IS STILL OPERATING PRETTY MUCH A ONE-MAN SHOW, AND THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT DESPITE HIS PYRO-TECHNICS HE IS EXPERIENCING LITTLE IF ANY GROWTH WHERE IT COUNTS--AT THE BALLOT BOX. HOWEVER, HE MAY WELL BE LOOKING BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE TO THE POST-CARAMANLIS PERIOD WHEN HE HOPES GREECE WILL EVENTUALLY TURN TO HIM--ON HIS TERMS--FOR LEADERSHIP. END SUMMARY.

2. PAPANDREOU CONTINUES TO BE SOMETHING OF THE ENFANT TERRIBLE OF GREEK POLITICS. HE SEEMS COMMITTED TO THE IDEA THAT POLARIZATION IN GREECE WOULD BENEFIT HIM AND THEREFORE IT IS DESIRABLE TO STAKE OUT A CLAIM ON ONE EXTREME. PAPANDREOU HAS THEREFORE SET HIMSELF APART NOT ONLY BY HIS POSITIONS ON DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN QUESTIONS BUT BY THE STRIDENCY WITH WHICH HE HAS VOICED THEM.
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FOR INSTANCE:
--WHEN EVERYBODY ELSE IN THE OPPOSITION AT LEAST TACITLY ENDORSED CARAMANLIS' STATESMAN-LIKE HANDLING OF THE SISMIK "CRISIS" LAST SUMMER, PAPANDREOU ALONE CALLED FOR THE GREEK MILITARY TO "SINK" THE SHIP:
--WHEN ALL OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES WORKED TO AVOID AT THE NOVEMBER 17 "POLYTECHNIC" COMMEMORATION A

CONFRONTATION BETWEEN STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS AND THE POLICE OVER A PLANNED MARCH TO THE EMBASSY, PAPANDREOU REFUSED TO HELP DISSUADE HIS YOUTHFUL FOLLOWERS FROM TRYING TO PROCEED TO THE EMBASSY AS PLANNED;
--WHEN ALL OTHER PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS, EXCEPT THE ORTHODOX COMMUNIST PARTY, HAVE ENDORSED THE IDEA OF GREECE JOINING THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, PAPANDREOU CONTINUES TO ATTACK THE IDEA.

3. FOR THE PAST TWO MONTHS PAPANDREOU HAS KEPT HIMSELF NEWSWORTHY BY ADVOCATING GREATER COOPERATION AMONG THE PARTIES OF THE OPPOSITION. THUS FAR THERE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY LITTLE PRACTICAL PAY-OUT FROM HIS ADVOCACY, AND PAPANDREOU HIMSELF HAS ADMITTED THAT UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES HE DOES NOT EXPECT ANY SORT OF ELECTORAL ALLIANCE TO EMERGE FROM HIS EFFORT. CERTAINLY, THE OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE FAILED TO GATHER AROUND FOR "GREATER COOPERATION". MORE IMPORTANTLY, HIS PASOK PARTY AND THE LARGER UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER (UDC) HAVE APPARENTLY MADE NO GENUINE MOVES TOWARDS AMALGAMATION. QUITE THE CONTRARY:

--PAPANDREOU HAS AGAIN PUBLICLY LABELED PASOK "MARXIST" IN HIS NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE UDC LEADERSHIP, IN DEFERENCE TO THE OPINIONS OF THE PARTY'S MODERATE FOLLOWERS, HAS BEEN EDGING AWAY FROM THEIR EARLIER PROCLAMATION THAT THE UDC IN A "SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY".

--EARLIER THIS WEEK, PAPANDREOU RENEWED HIS ATTACKS ON GREECE'S PLANS TO JOIN THE EC. IN A WIDELY PUBLICIZED CONFIDENTIAL

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ADDRESS, HE CHARGED THE GOG NEEDLESSLY MADE REPEATED CONCESSIONS IN BOWING TO EC DEMANDS, WEAKENING GREECE'S EVENTUAL POSITION IN THE EC AND, MORE ALARMINGLY, THAT THE GOG ACCEPTED THE EC COMMISSION'S LINKAGE OF TURKEY WITH GREECE'S ENTRY NEGOTIATIONS. JOHN PESMAZOGLOU, A HIGHLY RESPECTED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UDC'S LEFT WING AND PRESIDENT OF THE GREECE-EEC MIXED PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE, IMMEDIATELY COUNTERED PAPANDREOU'S CHARGES--AND IN EFFECT DEFENDED THE GOG.

4. TO BE SURE, THERE ARE SOME UDC AND PASOK DEPUTIES (NOT ALL OF WHOM, WE HEAR, ARE HAPPY WITH PAPANDREOU) WHO SEE UNITY OF THEIR TWO PARTIES AS A WAY OF ASSURING THEIR HOLD ON THEIR RESPECTIVE SEATS WHENEVER ELECTIONS COME. HOWEVER, OTHER UDC DEPUTIES WHO FOR THEIR OWN REASONS OPPOSE SUCH A MARRIAGE--OR REMARRIATE--ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE POLITICAL PROGRAMS OF THE TWO PARTIES AS WELL AS THE MUTUAL UNWILLINGNESS OF EITHER PAPANDREOU OR UDC LEADER

GEORGE MAVROS TO GIVE WAY TO THE OTHER AS LEADER OF A
UNITED CENTER WILL ASSURE A CONTINUED DIVISION.

5. PAPANDREOU BY HIMSELF IS ABLE TO DRAW LARGE,
ENTHUSIASTIC, YOUNG CROWDS WHEREVER HE GOES--THOUGH
THE SCHISM OF HIS YOUTH MOVEMENT LAST MONTH MAY CUT
INTO HIS YOUNGER FOLLOWING SOMEWHAT. HE HAS A LARGE
AND WELL-FINANCED PARTY ORGANIZATION. HE IS AN
EXCELLENT SPEAKER; HE HAS BEEN TRAVELING INTENSIVELY
AND PROJECTS CHARISMA. YET, BY MOST ACCOUNTS, HE DOES NOT SEEM
TO BE ADDING TO HIS ELECTORAL STRENGTH OF JUST OVER 13 PERCENT
IN THE 1974 ELECTIONS. IN FACT, ONE RECENT PUBLIC COMMENT BY
PAPANDREOU SUGGESTS
THAT TODAY HE, HIMSELF, WOULD NOT EXPECT PASOK TO RECEIVE MORE
THAN 17 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN A POPULAR ELECTION. PAPANDREOU
HAS TOLD OTHER EMBASSIES HERE THAT HE IS AIMING NOT AT
THE NEXT ELECTION BUT THE ONE AFTER THAT, SO HE MAY
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NOT BE TOO UPSET BY HIS PRESENT FAILURE TO EXPAND
MEASURABLY UPON HIS ELECTORAL BASE. INSTEAD, HE MAY BE
LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE AND THE PROMISE BROUGHT ON BY
WHAT HE SEES AS CIRCUMSTANCES INEVITABLY CHANGING IN HIS FAVOR,
ESPECIALLY IN THE POST-CARAMANLIS ERA.
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